

Federal Registration and Absentee Voting Programs

Federal Post Card Application Forms (FPCA's)

The Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) is a postage-free voter registration/absent voter ballot application produced and distributed by the federal government. The following persons are eligible to use an FPCA to register to vote and request an absent voter ballot:

- 1) Members of the Armed Forces and their spouses and dependents.
 - 2) Members of the Merchant Marine and their spouses and dependents.
 - 3) U.S. citizens temporarily living or traveling outside of the territorial limits of the United States.
- A person who is eligible to use an FPCA to obtain an absent voter ballot may register up to 8:00 p.m. on the day of the election; *the 30-day registration deadline is waived*. If an individual submitting an FPCA is not registered to vote, the FPCA can be accepted as the voter's registration application.
 - An FPCA may be used by one person only; if a husband and wife or several family members who are eligible to use an FPCA wish to obtain absent voter ballots, each must complete a separate FPCA form.

Additional Considerations for Absent Uniformed Services Voters and Overseas Voters

- Local election officials must provide return notification in any instance where a voter registration application or absent voter ballot request submitted by an absent uniformed services voter or an overseas voter is rejected. The notifications can be issued by any convenient means (letter, fax or e-mail).
- An absent voter ballot request submitted by an absent uniformed services voter or an overseas voter must be honored "through the next 2 regularly scheduled general elections for federal office." A request submitted for an August primary must be honored for corresponding November general election and the August primary and corresponding November general election held in the following even numbered year. Since this requirement only impacts elections involving federal offices, an absent uniformed services voter or overseas voter who wishes to vote in any other election must submit a separate absentee ballot request.
- An absent voter ballot request submitted by an absent uniformed services voter or an overseas voter *must be honored for every election* conducted in the applicant's city or township of residence or village of residence (if any) through the balance of the calendar year – including all school district elections. To facilitate this requirement, city, township and village clerks and school election coordinators must share information as

necessary to facilitate the issuance of ballots to overseas voters who are entitled to receive an absent voter ballot for each election held during the calendar year.

- If an absent uniformed services voter or an overseas voter submits a signed absent voter ballot request, an absent voter ballot is immediately forwarded to the applicant. As noted above, if the applicant is not registered, and the FPCA form was used, the FPCA is accepted as the voter's registration application.

If the FPCA form was not used, immediately send the requested ballot and registration forms. In this case, it is recommended that a separate envelope be provided for the return of the completed voter registration form. If the registration forms and the ballot are returned by 8:00 p.m. on election night, the ballot can be counted.

- Each state must submit a report to the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) no later than *90-days after each Federal election* which provides 1) the *number of absent voter ballots issued* to absent uniformed services voters and overseas voters and 2) the *number of absent voter ballots "returned by such voters and cast in the election."* The Bureau of Election provides county and local election officials with forms and instructions for compiling and submitting the required data.

Frequently Asked Questions: The following addresses a number of frequently asked questions regarding absent uniformed services and overseas voters:

- A qualified elector who is overseas and who resided in Michigan immediately before leaving the United States may register in the city or township where his or her residence was located – even if an established place of residence is no longer maintained in the city or township.
- There is no limit to the length of time a person may reside or travel outside of the territorial limits of the United States and still vote by absent voter ballot. As long as the person remains qualified to vote and properly applies for ballots, the ballot requests must be honored.
- If an absent uniformed services voter or an overseas voter submitting an absent voter ballot request or voter registration application is not registered in the city or township – and it can be determined from the information supplied on the form that the person does not have the necessary qualifications to vote in the jurisdiction – a letter of explanation must be sent to the applicant.
- If an absent uniformed services voter or overseas voter (or a spouse or dependent) applies for an absent voter ballot in a letter instead of an FPCA, immediately send the requested ballot if the applicant is registered. If the applicant is not registered, immediately send the requested ballot and registration forms. If the registration forms and the ballot are returned by 8:00 p.m. on election night, the ballot can be counted.

Federal Write-In Absentee Ballots (FWAB's)

The Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) is a special write-in ballot which can *only* be used to vote for federal offices on the November general election (even-numbered year) ballot. The form is provided and distributed by the federal government. The following persons are eligible to use an FWAB:

- 1) Members of the Armed Forces and their spouses and dependents.
 - 2) Members of the Merchant Marine and their spouses and dependents.
 - 3) U.S. citizens temporarily living or traveling outside of the territorial limits of the United States.
- An FWAB is not valid unless the voter submitted a written request for an absentee ballot by Saturday 2:00 p.m. preceding the election. An absent voter ballot request received by the Bureau of Elections or a county clerk's office on or before the deadline satisfies the application deadline.
 - If a voter who requests an absentee ballot returns both the ballot issued by the clerk's office and an FWAB before 8:00 p.m. on the date of the election, the clerk accepts the ballot issued through his/her office and rejects the FWAB. On the other hand, if both ballots are returned -- and one of the ballots arrives before 8:00 p.m. on the date of the election and the other ballot arrives after 8:00 p.m. on the date of the election -- the clerk accepts the ballot submitted on time regardless of whether it is the FWAB or the ballot issued through his/her office and rejects the ballot that arrived late.
 - If the voter's signature is missing, the FWAB is invalid.
 - The FWAB can be used to vote for the federal offices on the ballot (President/ Vice President, U.S. Senator and U.S. Representative); it *cannot* be used to vote for any other offices or on proposals.
 - A voter using an FWAB can cast a vote for a candidate seeking a federal office at the election by writing in the candidate's *name or political party*. If the voter writes in the name of a political party, a vote is counted for the candidate seeking the office under the indicated party's vignette.
 - A voter is *not* required to fill in an oval or complete an arrow on the FWAB for their vote to be counted.
 - Federal law provides that any abbreviation, misspelling or other minor variation in the form of a candidate's name or the name of a political party is to be disregarded in determining the validity of the vote cast if the voter's intention can be determined.

Mailing APO/FPO Absentee Ballots: To ensure the most efficient handling of absentee ballots mailed to members of the military stationed outside of the United States, the United States Postal Service (USPS) requests that all APO/FPO absentee ballots be 1) separated from all regular mail and other domestic absentee ballots and 2) delivered directly to a

USPS clerk or mail carrier. The USPS further cautions that to avoid delivery delays, APO/FPO absentee ballots should not be placed in USPS collection boxes.

Obtaining Updated Mailing Addresses: Updated mailing addresses for military voters can be obtained by contacting the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) office in Washington, D.C. Seeking such information is essential anytime there is a question over a military voter's current address or in any instance where an absent voter ballot mailed to a military voter is returned as "undeliverable." There are two ways to seek such assistance:

- Fax the military voter's name, birth date, Social Security Number (if available) and any addressing information on file for the voter to the FVAP office. Fax number: (703) 696-1352.
- Call the FVAP office and ask to speak to a representative. Toll free number; (800) 438-8683.